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ABSTRACT

An examination was made of how newly hired counselors in eastern North Carolina were functioning in schools. An attempt was also made to determine the counselors' level of satisfaction with these roles. School principals of participating counselors completed surveys to ascertain the degree to which their perceptions agreed with that of their counselors. A total of 45 counselors and 30 principals completed the surveys. A majority (62%) of the counselors agreed that they were prepared for their positions. However, almost a third indicated that they were not prepared for what the schools expected of them. The findings indicated some differences between the perceptions of counselors and principals regarding certain responsibilities, roles, and functions. They also had different perceptions of the amount of time counselors spend in direct services. Overall, a majority of principals and counselors agreed on the need for comprehensive programs but noted that other demands take counselors away from their primary function. The general level of job satisfaction for the school counselor was a serious concern and suggestions are offered to help solve this problem. Counselors indicated that they received little or no mentoring from other school counselors and thought such a service would be helpful. (Contains 10 references.) (JDM)

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FINAL REPORT

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Perceptions of School Counselor's Role and Satisfaction by Newly Hired Counselors and Principals in Eastern North Carolina

Since its inception at the turn of the twentieth century and now into the twenty-first century, the counseling profession has endeavored to identify and clarify the role of counselors in schools (Baker, 2000, Schmidt, 1999). Throughout this period, school counselors, counselor educators, and professional associations, especially the American School Counselor Association (ASCA), have attempted to describe and delineate the purpose of placing counselors in schools and the essential functions these counselors should perform.

Beginning in the 1960's and through the 1990's, much of the counseling literature attempted to refocus the profession by encouraging school counselors to take a more proactive stance in establishing comprehensive programs of services for students, parents, and teachers (Aubrey, 1982; Hays, 1978; Hitchner & Tifft-Hitchner, 1987; Schmidt, 1984, 1991, 1999). During this time, the profession emphasized the development of comprehensive programs of services, a cooperative venture between counselors, teachers, and administrators in meeting the developmental needs of students. Through the years, this focus has continued with the American School Counselor Association (ASCA) adopting this definition of school counseling:

> School counselors work with all students, school staff, families, and members of the community as an integral part of the education program. School counseling programs promote school success through a focus on academic achievement, prevention and intervention activities, advocacy, and social/emotional and career development. (Campbell & Dahir, 1997, p. 8)

Still, the purpose of school counseling programs and the role of school counselors continue to be unclear. In an extensive review, Borders and Drury (1992) concluded, "Legislators, principals, parents, and even some school counselors are still confused, if not woefully

uninformed, about the contributions of school counseling programs and role of school counselors" (p. 487). Today, school counselors perform a wide range of services. Often, these services have little to do with counselors' preparation, or with direct services to help students with development and learning.

The reality of school counselors performing varied functions unrelated to direct services to students is particularly true in North Carolina. A study by the State Department of Public Instruction (North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, 2001) concluded that "school counselors . . . are not dividing their time according to suggested national standards and . . . a significant amount of time is spent on non-counseling activities, such as testing, covering classes, and registrar activities" (p. 10). In eastern North Carolina this finding is verified by the fact that many school districts use school counselors as testing coordinators, special education committee chairs, assistant administrators, clerical assistants, and assign them various responsibilities unrelated to counseling services.

The purpose of this study was to examine how newly hired counselors in eastern North Carolina are being used in schools and their level of professional satisfaction with these roles. In addition, the study examined the match between counselors' professional preparation and the functions they perform in schools. School principals of participating counselors were also surveyed to determine the degree that their perception of these issues agreed with that of their counselors.

Two general questions comprised this study:

1. How do newly hired school counselors perceive their preparation, role, assigned functions, and level of job satisfaction?
2. How do principals perceive the preparation, role, assigned functions, and level of job satisfaction of newly hired school counselors?

Methodology

A sample of 7 school systems from the School of Education partnership group, consisting of 15 systems, was selected to participate in the study. The seven systems were identified because of their total student enrollment, the number of school counselors they employed, and their proximity to the university sponsoring the study. Superintendents of the seven systems were contacted and all agreed to participate in the study. Subsequently, each system responded with names and addresses of newly hired counselors, which were defined as counselors having less than five years of experience as a school counselor. Employment as a counselor for less than five years was selected by the researchers as a criterion for participation in the study to ensure a large enough sample of newly hired counselors. A total of 69 counselors and 69 principals were identified and mailed survey questionnaires (Appendices A & B).

Counselors who responded to the survey were invited to attend one of six focus groups scheduled in the surrounding counties. The focus groups used a structured interview format where participants responded to a series of open-ended questions that parallel the questions on the survey questionnaire (Appendix C). These included questions about their role as school counselors, their expectations when they accepted their current counseling positions, and their level of satisfaction with their actual role in relationship to their expectation and preparation as professional counselors. The participating counselors were also asked how long they expected to be in their current position. The focus groups were facilitated by one of the researchers and a second researcher scripted responses. In addition, each group session was audiotaped.

Qualitative analysis was used in this study. When appropriate, frequency distributions and descriptive data illustrate the findings.

Results

Counselor and Principal Questionnaires

Licensure. A total of 45 school counselors and 30 principals completed survey questionnaires for return rates of 65% and 43% respectively. Data from the counselor and principals' surveys are displayed in Tables I and II.

Of the counselors who responded to the survey questionnaires, 76% were fully licensed and 24% were provisionally licensed. In North Carolina, school systems that have difficulty finding licensed counselors can apply to the state for a provisional license if the counselor is in an approved graduate program of study and has completed at least 18 semester hours of the program. Although 76% of the respondents said they were fully licensed at the time they completed the survey, the focus groups later revealed that a portion of these counselors started in their positions as provisionally licensed counselors.

The principals were also asked about their counselors' licenses. Their responses concurred with the counselors', with 22% saying their counselors were provisionally licensed and 78% indicating their counselors were fully licensed. Also, 7% of the principals in this sample indicated that they held a license in school counseling.

Experience, Degrees and Preparation. The average number of years of experience as a school counselor was 2.2 years. Among the counselors in this sample, 84% had a master's degree in counseling, 11% had not yet completed their graduate degree, and 4% held a master's degree in a field other than counseling. A total of 32 counselors (71%) graduated from the university that sponsored this study, and 12 other colleges and universities were represented in the sample.

A majority of the counselors in this study agreed that they were prepared for their position (62%). However, almost a third indicated they were not prepared for what the schools expected of them and another 7% were unsure (Table II). The principals indicated somewhat different

perceptions with 0% indicating they thought the counselor was unprepared, but 41% were unsure. A total of 58% agreed their counselor was prepared.

Testing Coordination. A total of 59% of the principals said that their counselors coordinated the school's testing program, which closely approximated the 62% of the counselors who reported that they coordinated testing in their schools. Less agreement was found regarding how much time counselors spend coordinating the testing program. About half of the counselors said they spend between 25 and 50% of their time on testing while 30% of the principals said their counselors spend that much time. Similarly, 37% of the counselors said they spend less than a quarter of their time on testing, but 55% of the principals said it was less than a quarter of the counselor's time.

Special Education Coordination. In this survey, 26% of the counselors and 14% of the principals indicated that the counselor is responsible for coordinating special education (i.e., referrals, committee meetings, and placement through Individual Education Plans). Of the counselors who said they coordinate special education, over 80% said they spend between a quarter and half of their time in this function. Of the principals who indicated that their counselors coordinate special education, a slightly smaller percent (60%) said their counselors spend between 25 and 50% of their time in this function.

Direct Services. The survey found that 58% of the counselors spend less than half of their time in direct services, and 42% spend more than half their time in direct services. In contrast, 39% of the principals indicated that their counselors spend less than half of their time in direct services and another 60% said their counselors spend more than half of their time providing these types of services.

Expectation to Remain in Current Position. One-fifth of the counselors predicted they would remain in their current position less than two years. Another 48% said they would probably

remain in their position between two and five years. About a third indicated they would remain in their counseling position longer than five more years.

Comprehensive Counseling Program. Data comparing counselors' and principals' responses regarding school counseling program services are presented in Table II. A large majority of the counselors agree that they were supported by their principals in trying to establish a comprehensive counseling program (75%), while only 14% disagreed and 11% were unsure. Remarkably, 100% of the principals agreed that they supported a comprehensive counseling program. When specific questions about program services were asked, however, some differences in these perceptions were found. For example, 23% of the counselors indicated they did too much classroom guidance while only 3% of the principals agreed with this perception. Also, 56% of the counselors said they spent too much time on non-counseling functions, but only 34% of the principals thought so. There was more agreement between counselors and principals about whether or not the counselor has responsibility for setting his or her own schedule.

Supervision and Mentoring. Some counselors indicated they were not satisfied with the supervision received (24% disagreed; 9% unsure), while only 7% of the principals indicated they were dissatisfied with the counselor's supervision. Another 14% were unsure. A greater difference between the perceptions of counselors and principals was found in their responses to the question about mentoring. Over half of the counselors disagreed with or were unsure about the mentoring they received as a newly hired counselor. In contrast, only 7% of the principals perceived a problem with the mentoring their counselors received, and another 24% were unsure.

Role Satisfaction. Some differences were found between the counselors' and principals' perceptions of general satisfaction with the counselors' role in their schools. A total of 18% of

the counselors indicated they were not generally satisfied and 11% were unsure, while none of the principals thought their counselor was dissatisfied and 14% were unsure.

Focus Groups

During the six focus groups, one of the authors facilitated the sessions by giving introductory remarks and asking the questions (Appendix C). At each session, another author scripted the responses and an audio recording was made. Following the sessions, the author who facilitated the groups listened to the recordings and read summaries of written transcripts in order to summarize the results of the focus groups. These summaries highlighted frequently heard comments by participating counselors in response to the focus group questions.

A total of 34 counselors participated in the focus groups that were held in six different locations in eastern North Carolina. This is 75% of the sample that originally completed and returned survey questionnaires. Of this group, 20 participants were elementary counselors, 8 worked in middle schools, and 3 were high school counselors. Two of the counselors served at both the elementary and middle school levels, and one was a middle and high school counselor. Ten counselors in the focus groups said they were provisionally licensed (29%) and 24 were fully licensed (71%). These responses closely resemble the percentage of licensed and unlicensed counselors who completed the surveys. During the focus sessions, a few of the fully licensed counselors indicated they had begun their careers with a provisional license, so the percentage of counselors in this sample who began their career with a provisional license is actually higher than 29%. Among the focus group participants, 15 counselors had one year of experience as a counselor; 4 indicated they had two years; 10 had three years; 4 had four years; and one said she had 5 years of experience. This is an average of 2.18 years, approximately the same average years of experience for the counselors who completed the survey (2.2 years of experience).

Question 1: *If you are a fully licensed school counselor, talk a little bit about your decision to accept the position you currently have, and your readiness once your began.*

Participating counselors said they had accepted their current positions because they moved to the area, liked the administrators, found there was a demand for counselors, and they got to choose the position. Some counselors said that after teaching school for a while, they decided to change career paths.

Most of the counselors indicated they were prepared for their position through their internship experience. Many felt they did not anticipate the paperwork or the amount of testing being done in the schools. One counselor said she did not feel fully ready until after her first year as a counselor. Several indicated that their teaching experience helped them adjust to the counseling position.

Question 2: *If you are a provisionally licensed school counselor, talk a little about your decision to take the position you currently have and your readiness for the job once you began.*

Provisionally licensed counselors accepted the position they currently have because they needed to work, the timing was good, or they felt ready because of a background in teaching or counseling practicum and internship experiences. About half of the provisionally licensed counselors indicated they were ready and knew what they were getting into when they accepted the job. For example, one counselor said she felt 70% prepared, and the support from the other counselors in her school helped. The other half felt they still had a lot to learn and were not ready for the administrative duties or for being a "catch-all" for duties that they felt "should not be put upon them." One counselor said she needed to learn better time management skills. Another counselor said, "It was a bad decision to take this position," and is thinking of leaving.

Question 3: *What have been the most satisfying aspects of being a school counselor?*

These counselors agreed that working with children was a most satisfying aspect of being a school counselor. Many thought working one-on-one with children, making a difference and seeing changes in students, and receiving appreciation from children, parents, and teachers were the rewarding aspects. A few counselors stated that parental involvement, helping families, and finding resources were satisfying. Other satisfying aspects were: career fulfillment, consulting with teachers, going to seminars, receiving supervision, having adult support, doing things the right way, and having "children who know what your job is as a counselor and who you are."

Question 4: *What have been the least satisfying aspects of being a school counselor?*

A majority of the counselors stated that state's testing program was the least satisfying aspect of being a school counselor. Many of the counselors in this sample were responsible for coordinating the testing program and believe that testing takes up too much time in schools. Most importantly for these participants, testing coordination takes them away from their primary role of assisting students, parents, and teachers. Other counselors also said not having time for students, having too much paperwork, and doing too much classroom guidance on a regular schedule to give teachers a break were not satisfying parts of their jobs. One counselor mentioned being a registrar or secretary was dissatisfying.

Some of the counselors indicated that being in charge of special education committees (for example, the Student Assistance Team) took valuable time away from direct services to students. Also, people not understanding the role of a counselor, lack of support from the administration and teachers, unreasonably high demands and expectations that counselors can do everything, and being spread too thin were other aspects mentioned as other contributors to counselors' dissatisfaction.

Question 5: *If you had the opportunity to renegotiate some of your current responsibilities, what would you say to your principal, and what response would you likely receive?*

Many participants replied that testing would be one responsibility they would gladly renegotiate. Others gave responses that included special education, classroom guidance and being able to make their own guidance schedule, handling records, dispensing drugs, doing paperwork, compiling suspension reports, and registering students. One counselor mentioned limiting the number of "hats" that counselors wear and being able to have more flexibility as two other points of negotiation.

If they asked their principal to renegotiate some of their responsibilities, most counselors said the response would be, "Who else will do it?" A variety of other responses during the focus group sessions included: "He would listen"; "My principal would want supportive research"; "Probably would want to know how it's done in other schools"; "He would say 'No'"; "He would like to change if he had the personnel"; "My principal would laugh"; "Would agree, but still give me the same duties"; "Would not be receptive"; and "Would say we need to hire more teachers and not a testing coordinator."

Question 6: *Testing is a major program in our schools. Talk about coordination of the testing program in your school. If you do not coordinate it, who does? If you do coordinate the testing program, how do you feel about this role?*

All but three counselors who participated in the focus groups said they coordinated the testing program. Counselors have very strong feelings about this role that has been placed upon them. Many in this sample said that it takes away from their counseling duties and "coordinating the testing program (finding proctors, space, etc.) is very frustrating." Counselors also expressed concerned for the students and the impact this much "high stakes testing" has on them. Other responses during the focus groups included: "It's a nightmare"; "Would gladly give it up"; "It's bothersome"; "It's added pressure, and teachers are frustrated;" "Anyone can do

testing coordination;" and "A testing coordinator should be a full position within a school." In summary, these counselors indicated that testing coordination takes up too much of their time, and, more importantly, denies students the services of a comprehensive school counseling program.

Question 7: *Special education is another important program in our schools. Who coordinates that program in your school and what involvement do you have with the exceptional students' program and with exceptional students themselves?*

Approximately half of the counselors in the focus group said they played a part in special education. Whether it is the chair of a student support team, chair of the 504 committee, or part of the initial screening, these counselors were involved. A few counselors said that the special education teachers and regular classroom teachers coordinated the special education programs in their schools. Others stated that they counsel exceptional students but are not involved in the placement process. These counselors work with parents of exceptional students, attend IEP conferences at parent's request, conduct guidance sessions in the EC classrooms, and do observations when necessary.

The counselors who coordinate special education programs or chair other related committees felt they were doing what teachers should be doing and said they did not have the training necessary for coordinating special education. Coordinating the special education program consists of much paperwork that can be overwhelming in schools that serve a high percentage of identified children.

Question 8: *When you first began as a school counselor, how much support did you receive? Did you have a mentor? If so, who was that mentor and what observations can you share about the mentoring you received?*

Some counselors stated that they were given a mentor when they first began as a school counselor. These mentors, for the most part, were teachers in the school. In general, the

counselors felt that another counselor would have been more helpful, and several found their own mentors within the school system. Most of the counselors indicated that they rely on other counselors as mentors, and said this was helpful to them. Some counselors did not receive a mentor and they found other colleagues to call upon. Some said they call upon the counselors who were their supervisors during practicum and internship experiences.

Question 9: *As you reflect back on the preparation you completed to be a school counselor, how is the match with your actual job requirements? What additional preparation do you think would have been helpful?*

A majority of the counselors said they were prepared for their job as a school counselor. At the same time, many expressed frustration that they are not doing what they were trained to do, and "no program could possibly prepare you for some of the job requirements." Several of the counselors said their internship and practicum experiences were most important, and also indicated that the core counseling courses in their master's program were helpful. Electives (such as special education) were also mentioned as helpful courses. A few counselors mentioned that having a background in education was a plus.

Several areas of additional preparation were mentioned during the focus groups. They included: (a) information about writing 504's and leading student services teams, (2) different types of exceptional children, (3) information on program planning and time management, (4) technology, (5) resources and contacts for scholarships, (6) classroom management skills, (7) how to work with adults, (8) preparation to understand how schools run, and (8) training in conduct disorders.

Question 10: *If you perform many functions that seem unrelated to your preparation as a school counselor, what are some of these responsibilities? Why do you suppose a counselor has been assigned these duties, and who would do them if a counseling position was not at the school?*

Some of the responsibilities mentioned as being unrelated to their preparation as school counselors were: coordinating the Student Information Management System (SIMS), handling student report cards, baby-sitting, doing breakfast duty, handing out medication, ordering textbooks, compiling the school violence report, coordinating testing, coordinating the school awards' program, coordinating ESL, chairing the SAT team, doing 504 reports, monitoring school attendance, handling discipline, monitoring records, and generating the honor roll. If counselors were not placed in schools, administrators would have to take on more of these responsibilities. Or, teachers, teaching assistants, and school secretaries, SIMS coordinators would have to assume more of these duties.

A few counselors mentioned that these responsibilities would not get done unless counselors did them. Other counselors believe they have been assigned these functions because the role of the counselor is so greatly misunderstood in schools. A few indicated that these duties have been placed on them because they were unable to say "No," or because their administrators know that they "will get the job done and will do it well."

Question 11: *Talk about the self-responsibility you have to create a professional role that is consistent with your ethical and professional beliefs.*

Some counselors mentioned that it is their ethical responsibility to define their role and make sure everyone in the school knows what they do everyday. A few counselors mentioned that they have daily plans so "no one can dump things" on them. These counselors mentioned keeping a log of everything they do. One counselor stated that she makes sure she has "valid reasons to be taken away" from her counseling responsibilities. Several of the participants noted

that upholding confidentiality and not being involved in school "gossip" is one important way they demonstrate ethical behavior.

Question 12: *What do you see yourself doing 2 years from today? How about 5 years from today?*

Approximately half of the counselors in the focus groups stated that within 2-5 years they would be pursing a higher degree, such as a doctorate, or seeking a license as a Licensed Professional Counselor (LPC). Ten of the counselors said they would still be school counselors in five years. Two indicated they would still be counseling in schools in two years, but were not sure about five years. Another two said they would be retired. A couple of counselors said they would remain in their school/school system for the next two years, but change schools/school systems within five years. Two counselors mentioned an interest in higher education counseling and three said they would be pursing an administration degree. One said she would like to be a testing coordinator in five years. Other plans mentioned included teaching at a university, going back to school, spending more time with family, consulting, and "moving on to bigger things."

Limitations

Several limitations must be considered when drawing conclusions about the findings of this study. As with all survey designs and focus group methods of gathering information, the reliability of such self-reports is suspect. In addition, the moderate to low return rates from the counselors (65%) and principals (43%), do not allow for a high level of confidence in the survey results. Furthermore, to ensure confidentiality for the participants, the researchers did not match counselors with their principals in analyzing the survey results. Therefore, it is likely that not all counselors were joined in the study by their principals. Lastly, this study was limited to the eastern region of one state, so implications for school counselor practice and job satisfaction in general would be speculative.

Despite these limitations, the findings of this study may provide useful information about how counselors and principals in eastern North Carolina perceive certain issues regarding the role and function of school counselors and the level of satisfaction newly hired counselors might have about their work. Examining these perceptions and different patterns between counselors and principals might be helpful to school systems in planning future counseling programs and services. If school systems make adjustments based on these findings, it might encourage persons hired for school counseling positions to remain with their school system for a reasonable period of time.

Discussion

This study attempted to examine the perceptions of newly hired school counselors and of their school principals about the role of counselors and job satisfaction. Overall, the findings from survey questionnaires suggest some areas of agreement and some areas of disagreement between counselors and principals. In addition, the focus group sessions with counselors highlighted more intensely some areas of professional practice and assigned functions that concern professional school counselors.

There is a need for prepared counselors to work in schools serving students, parents, and teachers. Approximately 25-30% of the participants in this study said that they were provisionally licensed when they began their school counseling careers. Although a majority of the counselors believed they were prepared for the position, over a third indicated they did not anticipate many of the functions expected by their schools. Often, these functions were not related to direct counseling and consulting services for students, parents, and teachers. Rather, these functions tended to be coordination of administrative activities such as managing the testing program, chairing special education committees, compiling suspension reports, dispensing drugs, and registering new students. Some counselors also mentioned teaching

classes on a required schedule to give teachers a break and substitute teaching as functions for which they were unprepared and did not anticipate.

Regarding the amount of time school counselors spend in direct services, the counselors and principals in this study have somewhat different perceptions. Less than a half of the counselors indicated that they spend a majority of their time in direct services, while almost 60% of the principals said their counselors spend most of their time providing direct services. These differing perceptions were repeated when counselors and principals indicated whether counselors spend too much time on non-counseling functions. A majority of the counselors thought this was so, while only 34% of the principals agreed.

Different perceptions about the school counselor's role were also found in responses about classroom guidance. Almost a quarter of the counselors believe they spend too much time doing classroom guidance, while only 3% of the principals believe this to be true. If the counselors' responses had been examined across levels—elementary, middle, and high school—the percentage of elementary counselors who thought they spend too much time in classroom guidance might be higher than the whole group. Elementary counselors are most likely to be required to do regular classroom guidance lessons, giving teachers a break in their instructional day.

The differing opinions about the amount of time counselors spent on specific functions and activities were somewhat reflected in the perceptions counselors and principals have about the support for developing comprehensive school counseling programs. Although a large majority of the counselors (75%) agreed that principals supported their effort to establish a comprehensive program of services, another 25% did not believe this to be true, or they were unsure.

Remarkably, 100% of principals agreed with the statement: "I support the counselor's actions to establish a comprehensive school counseling program." This positive position by the principals seems somewhat contradictory with the response of some principals to the statement:

"In general, the counselor is responsible for setting a schedule, organizing the counseling program, and determining what and when services will be delivered." In response to this statement, about a fifth of the principals disagreed. At the same time, about the same percentage of the counselors indicated they were not "responsible for setting my schedule, organizing the counseling program, and determining what and when services will be delivered." Another 7% of the counselors were unsure. If principals truly understand and support the concept of a comprehensive school counseling program, it could be argued that they would also give counselors the responsibility for the decisions that coincide with the development, management, implementation, and evaluation of such a program (Schmidt, 1999). In this sample, however, approximately one-fifth of the principals do not share this view.

Overall, this study found that a majority of the counselors and principals agreed on the need for a comprehensive program, and a majority of principals supported the counselors in this effort. Yet, both groups indicated that other duties and functions sometimes interfere. The degree to which these other functions, such as coordination of the testing program, having responsibility for special education committees, registering new students, and others, detract from direct services for students, parents, and teachers is perceived differently by school counselors and principals based on the findings of this study.

Regarding the responsibility of counselors to take charge of their role in schools, the focus groups in this study found that counselors struggled with the concept of "self-responsibility to create a professional role" consistent with their ethical and professional beliefs. Although several participants emphasized their ethical responsibility to maintain confidentiality, few talked knowledgeably about how they have developed comprehensive plans and a program of services to meet the needs of students and define their role as a school counselor.

The general level of job satisfaction for the counselors in this study is an area of serious concern. Almost a third of the participants indicated they were not satisfied with their role as a

school counselor, or they were unsure about their satisfaction. This contrasts with the view of the principals, 85% of whom indicated their counselors were satisfied. The large number of counselors in the focus groups who indicated they would not be in their current position much longer explicates the seriousness of this difference of perception. Even though most of the counselors said they were satisfied with their jobs, it appears that the responsibility they have for functions unrelated to counseling services is causing many to think about a new career direction. If more than half of the counselors hired by schools intend to leave before their fifth year, as indicated by the findings of this study, then providing consistent programs and services for students, parents, and teachers will become a continuing challenge for public schools.

Conclusion and Recommendations

The findings of this study indicate some differences between the perceptions of counselors and principals regarding certain responsibilities, roles, and functions expected of counselors in schools. These differences of perceptions can lead to role expectations and work assignments that take counselors away from the primary mission of a comprehensive school counseling program. This phenomenon often presents a conflict for both the principal and the counselor. Trying to meet so many external demands, principals search for personnel to help with various assignments and responsibilities. Without support for additional personnel, schools feel pressured to do what is expected with what they have. In this study, it appears that many counselors have become frustrated with this conflict to the point where a high percentage will leave the school counseling profession. For example, several counselors in the focus groups talked about getting their LPC (Licensed Professional Counselor) to go into private practice or work in agencies other than schools.

The loss of excellent counselors is tragic for public schools, which serve diverse student populations that require a broad range of services to assist with academic, career, and social/personal development. For this reason, the schools, the school counseling profession,

and graduate programs that prepare professional counselors must look for solutions to this problem. The findings of this study suggest the following recommendations to meet this challenge.

First, additional research is needed to examine the issue of how counselors are prepared to work in schools and how schools use their counselors. This preliminary study demonstrates the need for more research. If public schools need counselors who continue to be prepared by colleges and universities, there must be a clearer match between what the schools want and need and what counselors are prepared to do. If schools need different personnel to carry out administrative and coordinating functions so that counselors can provide responsive services and interventions, then the state and local school systems must support such positions.

School principals need to be informed about what a comprehensive school counseling program is and about the services a qualified counselor can provide. Currently, there does not seem to be any content in preparation programs for school administrators that gives them an understanding of the school counseling profession. Classroom teachers might also benefit from this information in their preparation programs.

Also, in this study the counselors indicated that they received little to no mentoring from other school counselors. In the past, the state included counselors in the mentoring program, but this was discontinued a few years ago. From the results of this study, it appears that new counselors want appropriate mentoring relationships during their initial employment. The state might reconsider the decision to exclude new school counselors from the mentoring program. Or, local school systems should be encouraged to provide appropriate mentoring for new counselors by experienced counselors in the system.

Future counselor education students may benefit from earlier field experience in schools during their training programs to help them decide if school counseling is the most appropriate setting to practice their profession. Counselor education students might also benefit from course

work to give them skills to persuade administrators and teachers how best to serve children, adolescents, and parents, and to advocate for comprehensive school counseling programs.

Lastly, the state needs to emphasize the role of school counselors as it is defined and described in the professional literature. Program guidelines, job descriptions, mentoring systems, and evaluation procedures for school counselors need to be widely disseminated by the Department of Public Instruction and incorporated into the preparation programs for teachers, principals, and counselors.

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Table I

Counselors' and Principals' Perception of Time Spent by Counselor on Testing Coordination, Special Education Coordination, and Direct Services to Students

Amount of Time:	0-24%	25-50%	51-75%	76-100%
Time Spent on Testing				
Counselors' responses	37%	50%	13%	0%
Principals' responses	55%	30%	15%	0%
Time Spent on Special Ed.				
Counselors' responses	18%	82%	0%	0%
Principals' responses	20%	60%	20%	0%
Time Spent in Direct Services				
Counselors' responses	12%	46%	23%	19%
Principals' responses	0%	39%	39%	21%

Table II

Counselors' and Principals' Perception of Graduate Preparation, Program Issues, and Satisfaction with Role, Supervision, and Mentoring

	Strgly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strgly Agree
Preparation Matched with Role					
Counselors	2%	29%	7%	49%	13%
Principals	0%	0%	41%	41%	17%
Support for Comprehensive Program					
Counselors	5%	9%	11%	43%	32%
Principals	0%	0%	0%	36%	64%
Too Much Time on Crises					
Counselors	7%	60%	16%	13%	4%
Principals	14%	57%	14%	7%	7%
Too Much Time in Class Guidance					
Counselors	16%	56%	7%	16%	7%
Principals	17%	69%	10%	3%	0%
Too Much Time on Non-Counseling Functions					
Counselors	7%	24%	13%	36%	20%
Principals	7%	41%	17%	24%	10%
Satisfied with Job Role					
Counselors	2%	16%	11%	47%	24%
Principals	0%	0%	14%	72%	14%
Responsible for Schedule & Program					
Counselors	4%	18%	7%	31%	40%
Principals	7%	14%	0%	48%	31%

Table II Continued

	Strgly Disagree	Disagree	Unsure	Agree	Strgly Agree
Satisfied with Supervision					
Counselors	11%	13%	9%	36%	31%
Principals	0%	7%	14%	59%	20%
Satisfied with Mentoring					
Counselors	20%	24%	7%	24%	24%
Principals	0%	7%	24%	52%	17%

Appendix A

School of Education
East Carolina University
Partnership Grant to Study School Counseling

School Counselor Questionnaire

Instructions: Thank you for agreeing to participate in our study of school counseling. As part of the study, we ask that you complete this questionnaire. Although we ask for your name on the questionnaire, this is only for tracking purposes in the study. Your identity will remain anonymous and none of your individual responses will be shared with your school system or be singled out as part of the summary of the study. Once your responses are entered in the database, this questionnaire will be discarded.
Return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed addressed stamped envelope.

Name: _____ School: _____
School System: _____

Your license as a school counselor: _____ Fully licensed as a school counselor
_____ Provisionally licensed as a school counselor

What graduate degree(s) do you hold?
_____ None
_____ Master's degree in counseling or counselor education
_____ Doctorate in counseling or counselor education
_____ Master's in field other than counseling: _____
_____ Doctorate in field other than counseling: _____

If you do not have a graduate degree in counseling, at what university/college are you enrolled for graduate study in counseling? _____
If you have a degree in counseling, where did you receive your master's?_____
How many years have you been a school counselor?_____
Are you responsible for coordinating the testing program in your school? ___Yes ____ No
If you are responsible for the testing program, approximately what percentage of your workweek is devoted to coordinating testing?
_____Less than 25% _____25-50% _____50-75% _____ More than 75%
Are you responsible for coordinating the exceptional students' program in your school?
_____Yes _____ No
If you are responsible for coordinating the exceptional students' program in your school, approximately what percentage of your workweek is devoted to this program?
___Less than 25% ___25-50% ____50-75% _____ More than 75%
Approximately what percentage of your workweek is devoted to direct services to students?
___Less than 25% ___25-50% ____50-75% _____ More than 75%
Approximately how long do you anticipate remaining in your present school counseling position?
_____ Less than 2 years _____2-5 years ____ 5-10 years ____ 10+ years

Please answer the remaining questions by using the following scale:

1 (Strongly Disagree) 2 (Disagree) 3 (Unsure) 4 (Agree) 5 (Strongly Agree)

Circle your response to each statement:

1. The preparation I received in graduate school matches the job role I am expected to perform in my school. **1 2 3 4 5**
2. I have received support from my principal to establish a comprehensive school counseling program. **1 2 3 4 5**
3. Too much of my time is spent in crisis counseling and intervention.
   1 2 3 4 5
4. Too much of my time is spent in doing classroom guidance.
   1 2 3 4 5
5. Too much of my time is spent doing non-counseling related functions.
   1 2 3 4 5
6. I am generally satisfied with my role as a school counselor.
   1 2 3 4 5
7. In general, I am responsible for setting my schedule, organizing the counseling program, and determining what and when services will be delivered.
   1 2 3 4 5
8. As a new school counselor, I am satisfied with the supervision I have received.
   1 2 3 4 5
9. As a new school counselor, I have received appropriate mentoring.
   1 2 3 4 5

Appendix B

School of Education
East Carolina University
Partnership Grant to Study School Counseling

School Principal Questionnaire

Instructions: Thank you for assisting with our study of school counseling. As part of the study, we ask that you complete this questionnaire. Although we ask for your name on the questionnaire, this is for tracking purposes only. Your identity will remain anonymous and none of your individual responses will be shared with your school system or be singled out as part of the summary of the study. Once your responses are entered in the database, this questionnaire will be discarded.

Return the completed questionnaire in the enclosed addressed stamped envelope.

_____ is a counselor at your school and has agreed to participate in this study. Please answer questions about the school counselor's role and function as they pertain to this particular counselor.

Your Name: _____ School: _____
School System: _____

How many years have you been the principal of this school? _____

Do you also hold a license as a school counselor ? _____ Yes _____ No

Is your school counselor: _____ Fully licensed as a school counselor
_____ Provisionally licensed as a school counselor

How many years has this person been a school counselor?___

Is this counselor responsible for coordinating the testing program in your school?
_____Yes _____ No

If the counselor is responsible for the testing program, approximately what percentage of the workweek is devoted to coordinating testing?
_____Less than 25% _____25-50% _____50-75% _____ More than 75%

Is the counselor responsible for coordinating the exceptional students' program in your school? _Yes __ No

If the counselor is responsible for coordinating the exceptional students' program in your school, approximately what percentage of the workweek is devoted to this program?
___Less than 25% ___25-50% ___50-75% _____ More than 75%

Approximately what percentage of the workweek does the counselor devote to direct services to students (i.e., individual counseling, group counseling, group guidance)?
___Less than 25% ___25-50% ___50-75% _____ More than 75%

Please answer the remaining questions by using the following scale:
1 (Strongly Disagree) 2 (Disagree) 3 (Unsure) 4 (Agree) 5 (Strongly Agree)

Circle your response to each statement:

1. The preparation the counselor received in graduate school appears to match the role expected by the school. **1 2 3 4 5**
2. I support the counselor's actions to establish a comprehensive school counseling program.
3. Too much of the counselor's time is spent in crisis counseling and intervention.
   1 2 3 4 5
4. Too much of the counselor's time is spent in doing classroom guidance.
   1 2 3 4 5
5. Too much of the counselor's is spent doing non-counseling related functions.
   1 2 3 4 5
6. The counselor seems generally satisfied with the role of counselor as implemented in this school. **1 2 3 4 5**
7. In general, the counselor is responsible for setting a schedule, organizing the counseling program, and determining what and when services will be delivered.
   1 2 3 4 5
8. As a principal, I am satisfied with the supervision the counselor has received.
   1 2 3 4 5
9. The school counselor has received appropriate mentoring.
   1 2 3 4 5

Appendix C

School of Education
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Partnership Grant to Study School Counseling

Focus Group

Welcome to our focus group on school counseling and thank you for agreeing to assist us with this study. The format for this focus group will be for me, the facilitator, to ask a question or make a statement and ask the group to respond. Each of you will be given a nameplate with a fictitious identity. I ask that you please use these names during the focus group. This will ensure anonymity during the session and in reporting our findings. I encourage each of you to be as honest with your opinions as you feel comfortable. We will be recording the session and a transcript will be compiled from the tape as part of our data collection. No actual identities of schools, counselors, or other people will be used in the final report. At this time, we ask for your agreement to keep the information shared in this focus group confidential. Is there anyone who has difficulty with this request? Are there any questions before we begin?

After answering questions, the facilitator says:

Let us go around the group and introduce ourselves and tell the level of school where we are a counselor, how long we have been a counselor, and whether or not we are fully licensed as a counselor or provisionally licensed. *[Read a nameplate and ask]* "_____ would you help by being first?" *[After the first counselor finishes, go on to the next and read the nameplate]* "_____ would you go next?" *[Continue this process of reading each counselor's nameplate to introduce him or her until all have been introduced.]*

If you are a fully licensed school counselor, talk a little bit about your decision to accept the position you currently have, and your readiness once your began.

If you are a provisionally licensed school counselor, talk a little about your decision to take the position you currently have and your readiness for the job once you began.

What have been the most satisfying aspects of being a school counselor?

What have been the least satisfying aspects of being a school counselor?

If you had the opportunity to renegotiate some of your current responsibilities, what would you say to your principal, and what response would you likely receive?

Testing is a major program in our schools. Talk about coordination of the testing program in your school. If you do not coordinate it, who does? If you do coordinate the testing program, how do you feel about this role?

Special education is another important program in our schools. Who coordinates that program in your school and what involvement do you have with the exceptional students' program and with exceptional students themselves?

When you first began as a school counselor, how much support did you receive? Did you have a mentor? If so, who was that mentor and what observations can you share about the mentoring you received?

As you reflect back on the preparation you completed to be a school counselor, how is the match with your actual job requirements? What additional preparation do you think would have been helpful?

If you perform many functions that seem unrelated to your preparation as a school counselor, what are some of these responsibilities? Why do you suppose a counselor has been assigned these duties, and who would do them if a counseling position was not at the school?

Talk about the self-responsibility you have to create a professional role that is consistent with your ethical and professional beliefs.

What do you see yourself doing 2 years from today? How about 5 years from today?